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3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization

Foreword of JPSR Issue

Natan Sharansky

When I was a dissident in the former Soviet Union, one of my regular activities was monitoring anti-Semitism, and smuggling out evidence and records of such activity to the West. I believed then that the free world, particularly after the Holocaust, would always be a staunch ally in the struggle against anti-Semitism.

Unfortunately, I was wrong. Today, as a minister in the Israeli government in charge of monitoring anti-Semitism, I find myself regularly summoning the ambassadors of West European states to protest anti-Semitic attacks on Jews in their countries and the often meek response of their governments.

Over the past four years, we have witnessed a resurgence of anti-Semitic activity in the democratic world. In Europe, synagogues have been burned, rabbis have been abused in the streets, Jewish children have been physically attacked on the way to school and inside schools, and Jewish cemeteries have been desecrated.

Recognizing the "New Anti-Semitism"

Moreover, the so-called "new anti-Semitism" poses a unique challenge. Whereas classical anti-Semitism is aimed at the Jewish people or the Jewish religion, "new anti-Semitism" is aimed at the Jewish state. Since this anti-Semitism can hide behind the veneer of legitimate criticism of Israel, it is more difficult to expose. Making the task even harder is that this hatred is advanced in the name of values most of us would consider unimpeachable, such as human rights.

Nevertheless, we must be clear and outspoken in exposing the new anti-Semitism. I believe that we can apply a simple test - I call it the "3D" test - to help us distinguish legitimate criticism of Israel from anti-Semitism.

The first "D" is the test of demonization. When the Jewish state is being demonized; when Israel's actions are blown out of all sensible proportion; when comparisons are made between Israelis and Nazis and between Palestinian refugee camps and Auschwitz - this is anti-Semitism, not legitimate criticism of Israel.

The second "D" is the test of double standards. When criticism of Israel is applied selectively; when Israel is singled out by the United Nations for human rights abuses while the behavior of known and major abusers, such as China, Iran, Cuba, and Syria, is ignored; when Israel's Magen David Adom, alone among the world's ambulance services, is denied admission to the International Red Cross - this is anti-Semitism.

The third "D" is the test of delegitimization: when Israel's fundamental right to exist is denied - alone among all peoples in the world - this too is anti-Semitism.

The Rise of Arab and Islamic Anti-Semitism

I am particularly concerned about the constant and growing stream of anti-Semitic propaganda from the Arab and Muslim world - including propaganda that is genocidal in nature against both Jews and the State of Israel. This should be of grave concern, not only to Israel and Jews but to men and women of good conscience everywhere. Such venom defiles the Middle East and the international climate of discourse, and makes it possible for unabashed Jew-hatred to be expressed with impunity.

Earlier this year, my office published a 150-page report on "Anti-Semitism in the Contemporary Middle East." The study surveys anti-Semitic reporting, editorials, and editorial caricatures in the

government- controlled press of Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states. In the more than one hundred editorial cartoons included in this report, Jews and Israelis are invariably represented as poisonous snakes, murderous Nazis, and bloodthirsty Crusaders.

We found that vicious anti-Semitism which expressly calls for massive terrorism and genocide against Jews, Zionists, and the State of Israel is becoming more and more commonplace across the Arab Middle East. Moreover, the borders between anti-Semitism, anti- Americanism, and anti- Westernism have become almost completely blurred. The overwhelming majority of this propaganda is issued from the government-controlled media and from supposedly respectable publishing houses closely tied to the Arab regimes.

There is a direct link between the laxity with which countries have responded - or not responded - to growing Arab/Islamic anti- Semitism and the sharp increase in physical and verbal attacks on Jews and Israelis globally.

I recognize that there have been positive developments in the fight against anti-Semitism over the past year or so. The Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has held several meetings on fighting anti-Semitism, and for the first time ever the UN Commission on Human Rights condemned anti-Semitism in three separate resolutions, which were adopted by consensus.

But these important initiatives are not sufficient to combat state-sponsored anti-Semitism, especially of the Arab/Islamic variety described above. For real progress to be made, the free world must be willing to not only publicly and forcefully condemn this anti-Semitism, but also to pursue a policy of linkage against states that support anti- Semitism.

The Need for a Linkage Policy

The effectiveness of a policy based on linkage was powerfully demonstrated a generation ago after a group of dissidents inside the Soviet Union, including myself, decided to form the Helsinki Group in the wake of the Helsinki accords - the very agreement that led to the establishment of the OSCE.

With the help of courageous leaders in the West who were willing to link their relations with the Soviets to their treatment of their own people, the Helsinki Group helped ensure that the Soviets could not take one step in the international arena without their human rights policies becoming an issue. As a result, real progress was made.

I believe that combating anti-Semitism ought to become a much more prominent issue in the bilateral relations between America and the Arab and Muslim worlds. Linkage can be used to marginalize the extremists and to encourage and support those who reject this virulent hatred.

Anti-Semitism is not a threat only to Jews. History has shown us that left unchecked, the forces behind anti-Semitism will imperil all the values and freedoms that civilization holds dear. Never again can the free world afford to sit on the sidelines when anti-Semitism dangerously emerges.

We must not let this happen. We must do everything in our power to fight anti-Semitism. Armed with moral clarity, determination, and a common purpose, this is a fight that we can and will win.

* * *

NATAN SHARANSKY, the former Prisoner of Zion who spent nine years in Soviet jails, was Israel's minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs when he wrote this article. In 2003 he founded the Global Forum against Anti-Semitism, which brings together Jewish leaders and organizations from five continents for coordination and consultation in the struggle against anti-Semitism. He has also served as minister of industry and trade, interior minister, minister of construction and housing, and deputy prime minister. His memoir, *Fear No Evil*, was published in the United States in 1988 and has been translated into nine languages. His book, *The Case for Democracy*, was published by Public Affairs (New York) in 2004.

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Board of Fellows of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

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